
REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ENTRY - SAMPLE 1

NOTE: Numbers in brackets in yellow, e.g. (1), refer to points made in the lecturer commentary.

Entry for week ____ 3 ____

Session The Learner: motivation and engagement

During this week's session, we discussed about the concept of motivation and engagement, some factors of motivation and a number of useful methods to facilitate engagement and enhance motivation. Linking to my reading materials, innumerable studies on motivation in foreign language learning have been appeared over the decades. Garder(1985), (1) defines motivation comprises effort and desire to achieve the goal of learning, plus favourable attitudes towards learning to language (2) ¹. In general, motivation equals arousing interests, however, from teacher's input, I realise ²that it also involves making a decision to act, sustaining to interest, and deciding how much effort you put in. In sum, motivation is much more about psychological process (4a).

Assuming that we all don't have motivation to encourage us to do things, our life must be full of dullness³, or even worse. After finishing group discussion and teacher's instruction, it comes to that in general terms, there are three major factors of motivation in learning: the learners' natural/internal interests; external motivation (its value in relation to achieving another goal, such as teacher rewards and success in the task); attitudes affect behaviour (Harmer 2007; Scrivener 1994). (1)

To me, among which, it is of great importance for learners to develop an internal sense of control if they are planning to achieve mastery of a particular skill. With respect to the motivational factors driving me to learn English, I have always been intrinsically motivated, this being reflected in my keen perseverance to ascertain exposure to the language. (3)

However, still, apart from my inner zeal⁴, I have also been motivated by some really excellent teachers who made learning the language in class very rewarding and meaningful, which played a vital role in my further developing an interest in the language (3). Hence, in my opinion, one of teacher's responsibilities is to provide a supportive environment to make learners discern the value of learning a language, which has a far-reaching effect on them in the future. |

Reference

¹ Example for point (6)

² Additional example for point (8)

³ Additional example for point (9)

⁴ Additional example for point (9)

Gardner, R.C. (1985) *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.

Harmer, J. (2007) *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. (4th edition). Harlow: Longman.

Scrivener, J. (1994) *Learning Teaching: A guidebook for English language teachers*. Oxford: Heinemann

Entry for week _____ 5

Session: Sequencing and Scaffolding

In the beginning of this week's session, we worked in groups to summarise the key points from readings. Walqui illustrates that scaffolding is connected to the ZPD- 'working in the ZPD, the learner is assisted by others to be able to achieve more than he or she would achieve alone.'⁽²⁾ (Walqui, 2006, p163⁵) **(6a)** In addition, Gibbons asserts that scaffolding is a kind of metaphor in terms of 'temporary but essential support' to enable learners to acquire new skills and language effectively. (Gibbons, 2003) **(6b)**

Scaffolding is a new concept to⁶ me as well as an essential area that I should keep focusing on to acquire more skills so as to involve better communication and interaction between me and my future students **(4b)**. There are numbers of distinctive types of pedagogical scaffoldings exist, among which, the strategy of building schema attracts me the most. As teacher illustrated in the class, building schema means to activate relevant prior knowledge and use it to enhance their understandings and to provide a basic framework for learning new information. Good learners can use schema effectively to build a bridge from the new and unknown, which made them able to discern what is important in the text and to ask questions to monitor comprehension.

Apart from activating schema, it is of great-essential for teachers to intervene a communication when learners need, which could promote oral fluency and enable students to interact effectively **(7)**. Thus, scaffolding is not rigid, but dynamics and flexible. However, *I am* **(8)** consistent with what teacher said in the class: excessive assistance is not good. Namely, teachers need to balance their support because sometimes an excess of scaffolding would increase learners' laziness **(9)** and deprive them from the way of individual critical thinking **(2) (5)**.

In addition, we discussed about the stages of a lesson and sequencing of tasks, which is a great benefit for our micro-teaching class. We can see how the sequences move from macro to micro, and from planned to improvised. As we all know, plans have a way of changing as they are being carried out so that pedagogical action is always a mixed of predicted and unpredicted, routine and innovation.

Reference

⁵ Additional example of point **(1)**

⁶ Additional example for point **(8)**

Gibbons, P. (2003) Scaffolding academic language across the curriculum. Presentation at American Association for Applied Linguistics, Arlington, VA, March 25, 2003. (10)

Walqui, A. (2006) Scaffolding Instruction for English Language Learners: A Conceptual Framework. *The International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 9(2), 159-180 (10b)

Entry for week ____6

Session: Teaching aspects of the system: grammar

In my understanding, grammar is extremely-essential⁷, which let us know how to put words together in a sensible order and add the right endings. In the earlier years of learning English, I put much emphasis on grammar as it accounted for a large proportion in the class. The predominant approach to grammar in China was a focus-on-forms approach. We have had enough of monotonous explanations and tedious drills⁸.

However, in terms of real-life outcomes, I didn't feel much progress in practical application in such learning process, thus, a practical approach still need to be discovered for teaching grammar. Whether or not, to attract learners' attention and interests, teachers need to make their grammar lessons more stimulating, engaging, and perhaps even humorous. Scrivener makes some good suggestions about "fun/alternative" drilling (Scrivener, 2005, pp. 255-264)⁹ (10d).

During the session, we discussed about three methods to teach grammar, they are deductive approach, inductive approach and the last one is to combine the former two methods together. I think teacher need to consider what he should focus on in one grammar lesson and then decide which approach is better. As inductive approach can trigger learners' interests and critical thinking by themselves, whereas when dealing with higher lever grammar rules, it is hard for learners to conclude by themselves and which is the proper time to use deductive approach.

Also, I agree with Ellis' suggestion that we should consider "those forms that differ from the learners' first language" and "marked rather than unmarked forms" when selecting what grammar to teach (Ellis, 2006: 88-89) (10d). For an English L2 learner, he should put more emphasis on the discrepancies of the grammar between his mother language and English so as to strengthen his English language fluency. In other words, a grammar point could be taught when it is needed, to satisfy a learner's need for communication.

Reference:

⁷ Example for point (9)

⁸ Example for point (9)

⁹ Additional example of point (1)

Ellis, R. (2006). Current Issues in the Teaching of Grammar: An SLA Perspective. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40: 83–107. (10b)

Scrivener, J. (2011) *Learning Teaching: A Guide Book for English Language Teachers*. (3rd edition) Macmillan, chapter (10c)